

This is of Aucassin and Nicolette

THIS IS OF AUCASSIN AND
NICOLETTE: A SONG-TALE
OF TRUE LOVERS & TRANS-
LATED INTO ENGLISH BY
M. S. HENRY FROM THE LIT-
TLE VARYING OLD FRENCH
TEXTS OF H. SUCHIER, GAS-
TON PARIS AND F. W. BOUR-
DILLON, AND THE VERSE
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THIS IS OF AUCASSIN AND
NICOLETTE



HO lists a goodly tale
to hear,
That was an aged
captive's cheer,
Of youth and maiden
fair and sweet,
Aucassin and Nicolette,
Of what great pains he had despite,
And of his prowess in the fight
For his true-love of visage bright?
The song is sweet, the story fair,
Seemly, courtly, debonair;
No man there is so sore aghast,
By pain so wearily held fast,
By might of sorrow laid so low,
But if he hear it straight he'll go
Made brave by joy and healed com-
plete,
It is so sweet.

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Tell:

HOW the Count Bougars de Valence made war against the Count Garin de Beaucaire so great and so strong and so deadly that not a single day dawned when there were not at the gates and at the walls and at the barriers of the town a hundred Knights and ten thousand men-at-arms, horse and foot; and they burned his estates and laid waste his country and killed his men.

The Count Garin de Beaucaire was old and frail, he had outlived his time. He had no heir, neither son nor daughter, except one only boy; who was of such sort as I shall tell you.

Aucassin was the young lord named: he was fair and graceful and tall and well shaped of legs and feet and body and arms. He had golden

hair curling in small curls, and eyes gray-blue (vair) and laughing, a face bright and comely, and a nose high and well set; and he was so gifted with good gifts that he had in him nothing that was bad—good only. But he was overcome by Love, which conquers all, and wished not to be a Knight, nor to take to arms, nor to go to the tourney, nor to do anything that he ought. His father and mother said to him: ♣ “Son, now take thy arms, and mount horse and defend thy estate and help thy men! If they see thee among them, so will they the better defend themselves and their goods and thy domain and mine.” ♣ “Father,” said Aucassin, “now of what do you speak? May God give me nothing that I ask Him if I be a Knight, or mount horse, or go to the combat or to the battle where I may

strike Knights and others strike me, if you give me not Nicolette, my sweet friend that I love so much." "Son," said the father, "this cannot be. Let Nicolette alone. She is a captive that was brought from a strange country, and the Viscount of this town bought her from the Saracens, and brought her to this town; and he has reared and baptised and made her his god-daughter, and one of these days he will give her to a simple youth who will honourably earn her bread. With this hast thou naught to do. And if thou wish to take a wife I will give thee the daughter of a King or of a Count. There is not so great a man in France but, if thou wished to have his daughter, he will give her to thee." "Alack! father," said Aucassin, "where is there, now, so high a dignity on earth that if Nicolette, my

sweet friend had it, she would not well uphold it? If she were Empress of Constantinople or of Germany, or Queen of France or of England, it would be little enough for her; so true is she and courteous and gentle and gifted with all good qualities."

Now it is sung :

AUCASSIN was of Beau-
caire, [fair;
His dwelling was that Castle
From Nicolette, the shapely may,
No man could draw his heart away;
But her his father him denied,
And him his mother oft would chide:
"How now, fool! What would'st
thou risk?

Nicolette is bright and brisk,
But cast away from Carthage when
They bought her from a Saracen!
Since you desire to wed a mate
Choose some dame of high estate."

“ Mother, I can no other bear
For Nicolette is debonair,
So gentle shaped, her looks so clear,
Her beauty gives my heart its cheer.
That I should have her love is meet,
Who is so sweet.”

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say :

WHEN Count Garin de Beau-
caire saw that he could not
withdraw Aucassin, his son,
from love of Nicolette, he betook
himself to the Viscount of the town
who was his vassal and accosted
him : “ Sir Viscount ! Now away
with your god-daughter ! Cursed be
the land from which she was brought
into this country ! For by her I lose Au-
cassin, who will neither be a Knight
nor do anything that he ought. And
know well that if I can seize her I will
burn her in a fire—and you too may

have great fear for yourself!" "Sir," said the Viscount, "it troubles me that he goes, or that he comes, or that he speaks to her. I had bought her with my money, and had reared her and baptised her and made her my god-daughter, and would have given her to a simple youth who would honourably earn her bread. With this had Aucassin, your son, nothing to do. But since it is your will and your good pleasure, I will send her to such a land and to such a country that his eyes shall never behold her." "Now, have a care for yourself!" said the Count Garin; "great evil may come of it to you."

They parted. Now the Viscount was a very rich man and had a rich palace in a garden. In a chamber there, in a high storey, he had Nicolette put, and an old woman with her

for company and to hold fellowship,
and he had bread and meat and wine
put there—and whatever they could
need. Then he had the entrance
sealed so that there was no way to go
in there, nor to come out—except
insomuch as there was a window
towards the garden—small enough
—from which a little fresh air came
to them.

Now it is sung:

SO Nicolette is thrust in gloom
Within a vaulted prison-
room;

'Twas fashioned in a curious wise
And painted to a wondrous guise.
Against a marble casement now
The tristful maiden leaned her brow:
Her hair was of the shine of gold,
Her eyebrows delicate enscrolled,
Her comely face was clear as air—
None ever saw a face more fair.


Over the woods she gazed about,
And saw the roses opened out,
And saw the little song-birds fly,
And cried "A woful orphan, I!
Ah, me, aweary, wretched me,
Why must I here in prison dree?
O Aucassin, my love, my lord,
Ever art thou by me adored,
And me, in sooth, you do not hate;
For thee I'm in this prison-grate,
For thee I'm in these vaulted walls,
Where heavy sadness me enthralls:
But yet, through Mary's Son, I still
Shall not stay long held by this ill,
For want of will!"


Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

NICOLETTE was in prison in
the chamber as you have heard
and understood. The cry and
the noise went through all the land and
through all the country that Nicolette

was lost. Some say she is fled out of the land and some say that the Count Garin de Beaucaire has had her murdered. Whoever had joy of this Aucassin was not joyful; but he went to the Viscount of the town and accosted him: ♣ "Sir Viscount, what have you done with Nicolette, my most sweet friend, the thing I love most in all the world? Have you carried her away or stolen her from me? Know well that if I die of it vengeance will be claimed from you for it; and that will be very just; for you will have killed me with your two hands; for you have taken away from me the thing that I love most in the world." ♣ "Fair Sir," said the Viscount, "now let be! Nicolette is a captive whom I have brought from a strange land; and I bought her with my money from the Saracens, and I have reared and baptised and made

her my god-daughter; and I have maintained her, and I would have given her, one of these days, to a simple youth who would honourably earn her bread. With this you have nothing to do. But take the daughter of a King or of a Count. Moreover, what do you think you would have gained if you had made her your paramour, or put her in your bed? Much loss thereby, little gain; for to the world's end your soul would always be in hell, and into Paradise you would never enter." ❀
"What have I to do in Paradise? I seek not to enter there, but let me have Nicolette my most sweet friend whom I love so much. Into Paradise none go except the sort of people I will tell you of. There go those old priests and those lame and crippled ones who all day and all night grovel before altars and in old crypts; and those clothed in

old, worn cloaks and in old rags; those who are naked and barefoot and full of sores; those who die of hunger and of thirst and of cold, and of miseries. These go to Paradise; with them have I nothing to do; but into hell I wish to go. For into hell go the goodly clerks and the goodly knights, who have died in the tourneys and in the great wars; and the good soldier and the true man. With these do I wish to go. And there go also the fair, courteous ladies who have two loves or three besides their lords. And there go also the gold and the silver and the rich furs (et li vair et li gris); and there go also the harper and minstrel and the Kings of the world. With these I wish to go, only let me have Nicolette, my most sweet friend, with me."  "Certes," said the Viscount, "you speak in vain; for nevermore shall you see her. And if

you should speak to her and your father should know it, he would burn both me and her in a fire, and you yourself might have great fear." 
"This troubles me," said Aucassin. He went from the Viscount, grieving.

Now it is sung:

SO Aucassin has turned away
In sorrow sore and deep dismay,
Lamenting for his bright-faced
may;

No man could comfort him a word,
Nor make the voice of counsel heard;
He hied him back to tall Beaucaire,
And strode him up the Castle stair,
And entered to his chamber's keep,
And straight began to wail and weep,
And very doleful plaint to make,
All for his gentle true-love's sake.


"O Nicolette, O fair of mien!
Coming or going fair beseen,

Fair in laughter, fair in play,
In jesting fair of speech alway,
In kissing sweet, embracing so!
For loss of thee I have such woe
That here I'm fain to make an end,
Sweet sister friend!"

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say :

A HILE Aucassin was in the chamber, and lamenting Nicolette, his love, the Count Bougars de Valence, who had his war to finish, forgot it not, but called forth his men, horse and foot and led them to assail the castle. And the cry rises, and the noise; and Knight and follower arm and run to gate and walls to defend the castle; and the townsman climbs behind the battlements of the walls and throws bolts and sharpened stakes. While the assault was great and in full force the Count

Garin de Beaucaire went into the chamber where Aucassin made dole and lamented Nicolette, his most sweet friend whom he loved so much.

"Ha! son," cried he, "how very contemptible and unhappy art thou, in that thou seest thy castle assaulted, the best and strongest. And know, if thou lose it, thou art disinherited! Son, now take arms and mount horse and defend thy land and help thy men and go to the storm. There, even if thou strike no man and no man thee, yet, if they see thee among them, they will the better defend their goods and their bodies and thy land and mine. And thou art so big and so strong that thou canst well do it, and do it thou should'st."  "Father," said Aucassin, "now of what do you speak? May God give me nothing I ask of Him if I

will be a Knight, or mount a horse, or go to the fray where I may strike Knights or others me, if you do not give me Nicolette, my sweet friend, whom I love so much!" ❀ "Son," said the father, "this cannot be. Rather would I endure that I be all despoiled and that I lose all I have than that thou ever should'st have her as woman or as wife."

He turned away. And when Aucassin saw him go, he recalled him.

"Father," said Aucassin, "come back; I will make fair covenant with you." ❀ "And what, fair Son?" ❀ "I will take up arms, and I will go to the fray under this covenant, — that if God bring me back safe and sound, you will let me see Nicolette, my sweet friend, until I have spoken two or three words to her, and have kissed her only once." ❀ "I agree to it," said the father.

He granted it and Aucassin was
happy.

Now it is sung:

WHEN Aucassin hears of the kiss
That shall, when he returns, be
his,

A hundred thousand marks of gold,
By any one unto him told,
Would make his heart less gay and
bold.

"Bring armour," then he quickly bade,
And ready him they featly made,
A hauberk-doublet on him braced;
His helmet on his head he laced,
He girt his pure-gold-hilted glaive
And sprang upon his war-horse brave;
He took his shield, his spear he took,
And downward to his feet did look,
The stirrups fitted them full neat,
And wondrous well he held his seat:
His sweet true-love he had in mind,
He spurred his horse and left behind

The outer gate and sped away
To join the fray.
Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

AUCASSIN was on his horse, armed as you have heard and understood. Lord! how the shield sat to his neck, and the helmet to his head and the sword-belt on his left hip! And the boy was tall and strong and fair and graceful and well-knit, and the horse on which he sat was fiery and eager, and the boy had spurred him well through the gateway. Now do not suppose that he thought of taking oxen and cows and goats, nor that he struck Knights, nor others him. No, not at all, — he never dreamed of it; but thought so much of Nicolette, his sweet friend, that he forgot his reins and all that he ought to do. And the horse, which had felt the spurs, carried

him on through the press and plunged him into the midst of his enemies; and hands were stretched out on all sides to take him; and they wrested from him shield and lance, and took him prisoner then and there, and went ever debating by what death they should cause him to die.

And when Aucassin heard them:—

“Ah! Lord, merciful Being! Are these my mortal enemies who have taken me and now will cut off my head? And, if my head be cut off, nevermore shall I speak to Nicolette, my sweet friend whom I love so much. Yet have I this good sword and I sit on my good fresh steed. If now I do not deliver myself for her sake may God never help her if she love me more.”

The youth was tall and strong and the horse under him was eager. And he puts his hand to his sword and

strikes right and left, and cuts through helmets and nose-pieces and clenched hands and arms, and makes a havoc around him such as the wild boar makes when the dogs worry him in the forest. And then he overthrows ten Knights, and strikes down seven; and he pushed on at once out of the press and came galloping back, sword in hand.

The Count Bougars de Valence heard it said that they were going to hang Aucassin his enemy and he came that way—and Aucassin did not take it amiss. He gript his sword in hand and struck him upon the helmet so that he cut it through to the head. He was so stunned that he fell to the earth; and Aucassin put out his hand and seized him and led him captive by the nose-piece of his helmet and gave him to his father.

"Father," said Aucassin, "behold your enemy who has harassed you so much and made such trouble! Twenty years now this war has lasted; and never could be ended by man." ❀
"Fair son," said the father, "such deeds of hot youth should'st thou do, and not gape at folly." ❀ "Father," said Aucassin, "do not go preaching at me but keep my covenant with me!" ❀ "Bah! What covenant, fair son?" ❀ "Good faith! Father! have you forgotten it? By my head, whoever forgets it, I will not forget; for it holds me by the heart. Were you not in covenant with me when I took up arms and went to the battle, that if God should bring me back safe and sound you would permit me to see Nicolette, my sweet friend, until I should have spoken two or three words to her and should have kissed

her once? This had you in covenant with me and this promise I will have you keep to me." ❀ "I?" said the father. "May God never help me if I hold covenant with thee in this. And if she were here I would burn her in a fire, and thou, too, might have great fear." ❀ "Is this quite the end?" ❀ "So God help me," said the father, "yes!" ❀ "Certes," said Aucassin, "now I am muchgrieved when a man of your age lies."

"Count de Valence," said Aucassin, "I have taken you prisoner?" ❀ "Truly, Sir!" said the Count. ❀ "Give here your hand," said Aucassin. ❀ "Willingly, Sir." He put his hand in his. ❀ "Now swear to me," said Aucassin, "that if on any day that you may have to live you be able to do hurt to my father or annoy him in his being, or having, you will do it!" ❀

"Sir, for God's sake!" said he, "do not mock at me, but put me at ransom. You will never know how to claim of me gold, or silver, horses or palfreys, nor any sort of rich furs (ne vair ne gris), hounds or hawks, that I will not give them to you." ❀ "What!" said Aucassin, "do you not know that I have captured you?" ❀ "Sir, yes!" said Bougars. ❀ "May God never help me," said Aucassin, "if I do not make that head fly from you, if you swear it not to me!" ❀ "In the name of God!" said he, "I swear to you whatever it pleases you."

He swore to him; and Aucassin made him mount a horse, and he mounted another and went with him until he was in safety.

Now it is sung:

WHEN now Count Garin plain
doth see
Of Aucassin, his son, that he
Will never take his heart away
From Nicolette, his beaming may,
He has him in a dungeon bound;
The cell was builded underground,
And with gray marble walled around.
So now when Aucassin was there
He never knew such deep despair,
He took to lamentations drear
As you shall hear:—
“Ah, Nicolette, ah, Lily white,
Sweet love, of face sunshiny bright,
More sweet than ever grapes did
grow,
Or ever wine sop was, I trow!
One day I saw a pilgrim lie
On his bed and like to die,
(Of Limousin the man was born),
Much distressed and most forlorn,

Sick with fevered swimming head;
Thou didst pass anear his bed
And hap to grasp thy trailing gown
And ermine kirtle hanging down,
And raised thy linen smock a wee,—
So much the pilgrim he could see
Thy dainty foot and ankle slim.
Forth flew the fever out of him!
The pilgrim from his bed arose,
And back to his own country goes,
Safe and sound and free from teen,
And better than he'd ever been!
Sweetest love and Lily white,
Fair in greeting, fair in flight,
Fair in playing, fair in toying,
Speaking fair, and fair enjoying,
Kissing sweet, and sweet in cheer,—
None could ever hate thee, dear!
For thee I'm in this prison thrown,
Here I sit and make great moan,
And here meseemeth I shall end
For thee, sweet friend!"

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say :

AUCASSIN was in prison as you have heard and understood, and Nicolette was, on the other hand, in the chamber. It was in summer time, in the month of May, when the days are warm, long & clear, and the nights quiet and unclouded.

Nicolette lay one night in her bed and saw the moon shine clear through the window and she heard the nightingales sing in the garden and she thought of Aucassin her friend whom she loved so much. She began to think on the Count Garin de Beaucaire who hated her unto death, and so she thought that she would stay there no longer, for if she were betrayed and Count Garin knew of it, he would make her die an evil death.

She saw that the old woman who

was with her slept. She arose and put on a gown of cloth of silk, the best that she had; and took the bed-clothes and towels and tied them together, and made a rope as long as she could; and tied it to the post of the window, and let herself down into the garden; and she took her gown with one hand before and the other behind, and tucked it up for the dew that she saw big on the grass, and so she went down the garden. She had hair golden and curled in little curls, and eyes blue-gray and laughing, and face shapely, and a nose high and well-set, and lips redder than cherries or the roses in summer time—and teeth white and small. And she had firm little breasts that heaved her gown as if they were two walnuts; and she was so small around the middle that you could clasp it in your two hands; and the daisy flowers that she

bent with the toes of her feet, as they fell back on the instep above, were right black against her feet and her legs, so very white was the maiden.

She came to the postern gate and unlocked it, and so came out into the streets of Beaucaire, moving within the shadow, for the moon shone very clear, and she kept on until she came to the tower where her true-love was. The tower was supported with buttresses from place to place, and she crouched down beside one of the buttresses, and wrapped herself in her cloak; and she put her head into a chink in the tower, which was old and in decay, and she heard Aucassin weeping within and making great dole and lamenting his sweet friend whom he loved so much. And when she had listened to him long enough she began to speak.

Now it is sung:

NICOLETTE the bright-faced
may
Leaned against a pillar gray,
Then Aucassin she heard, full drear
Lamenting for his true-love dear,
So then she spoke and told her mind:—
“Oh, noble Aucassin and kind,
True young honoured lord, let be!
Lament no whit availeth thee
Since thou canst never cherish me;
Alas, thy father hates my name,
And all thy family the same;
Now for thy sake I'll cross the sea,
And wander in a far countree.”
She's cut a tress from off her hair,
And cast it in the dungeon there:
Now Aucassin the tress has ta'en,
And blest it o'er and o'er again,
And honoured it and fond caressed,
And kissed and hid it in his breast;
And then again in tears he brake,
For his love's sake.

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

WHEN Aucassin heard Nicolette say that she would go away into another country, he had no room in him but for rage:—

“Fair sweet friend,” said he, “you shall not go away, for then would you have killed me. And the first who should see you, if he could he would take you forthwith and would put you in his bed and make you his paramour; and, after you shall have been cast into the bed of any other man and not into mine, now think not that I shall wait until I find a knife with which I could strike myself to the heart and kill myself. Nay, truly, so long would I not wait, but would rush until I should see a wall or a gray stone, and there I would dash my head so hard that I should make the eyes

burst out and should knock out my brains entirely. Yet would I like better to die a death like that than know you had been cast into the bed of a man, and that not mine." "Ah," said she, "I do not think you love me so much as you say, but I love you more than you do me." "Alack!" said Aucassin, "fair sweet friend! it could not be that you should love me so much as I do you. Woman cannot love the man so much as the man does the woman. For the love of the woman is in her eyes, and in the tip of the nipple of her breast, and in the tip of the toe of her foot; but the love of the man is planted down in his heart from which it cannot come forth."

While Aucassin and Nicolette talked together the patrol of the town came along the street; and they had swords drawn under their cloaks, for

Count Garin had commanded them that if they could take her they should at once kill her. And the warden who was on the tower saw them come and heard how they went talking of Nicolette and how they threatened to kill her.

“God!” said he, “what great pity if they kill so fair a maiden! And it would be a very great kindness if I could tell her so that they could not notice it—that she might hide herself from them; for if they kill her then will Aucassin my young lord die, which would be great loss.”

Now it is Sung:

THE warden was of chivalrie,
Courteous, brave, and man-
nerlie,

So he began to sing a lay
Kind and pleasing to that may:—
“Little maid with open heart,

Very sweetly shaped thou art,
Smiling face and gray-blue eyne,
Head of golden hair ashine;
By thy seeming well I see
Thou'st spoken him who dies for thee.
Hear me now and understand;—
Hide thee from the hireling band,
They are coming thee to snare,
Swords beneath their cloaks are bare,
They come threatening to slay,
And they'll hew thee every way;
 Hide an thou may!"

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

OH!" said Nicolette, "the soul
of thy father and of thy mother
be in blessed rest, for that so
well and so courteously thou hast told
me this. If God please I will take
good care of myself, and may God
take care of me!"

She wraps herself in her cloak in the shadow of the buttress until they had passed beyond; and she takes leave of Aucassin, and goes on until she came to the wall of the castle. The wall had been broken down and she climbed upon it,—so did she go until she was between the wall and the moat; and she looked down, and saw the moat very deep and very steep, and she had very great fear.

“O God!” said she, “gentle Being! If I let myself fall I shall break my neck; and if I stay here, they will take me to-morrow and will burn me in a fire. Yet do I like better that I die here than that all the people might stare at me to-morrow with great wonder.”

She crossed herself, and she let herself slip down the moat; and when she came to the bottom her fair feet and her fair hands, which had never

learned that they could be wounded, were bruised and flayed, and the blood gushed from them in as many as twelve places; and notwithstanding, she felt neither wound nor pain for the great fear that she had. And if she was at great pains to get in, yet had she much greater to get out.

She thought it would not be well to tarry there, and she found a sharpened stake which those within had thrown to defend the castle, and she took one step above the other and thus climbed with great pains until she came up to the top.

Now there was a forest near, within two bowshots, which stretched quite thirty leagues in length and breadth, and there were savage beasts and serpents in it. She had fear lest, if she went there, they might kill her; and again she thought that if she were

found where she was she would be
carried back to the town to be burned.
Now it is Sung:

NICOLETTE, the bright-faced
may,
She has climbed the moated
way,

And she begins to sorely weep
And call on Jesus her to keep:—
“Father, Lord of Majesty,
Now I know not where to flee;
If I seek the thick branch'd wood
Wolves will seize me for their food,
Besides the lion and wild boar,
Which are there enough and more;
Should I wait the light of day,
And here be found, as well I may,
They will kindle up the flame,
And burn my body on the same;
But, by the Godhead's grace and
might,
I do prefer the forest plight,

That boar and lion me may eat,
And that the wolf shall find me sweet,
Than in the town be haled, and so
I will not go."

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say :

NICOLETTE lamented much,
as you have heard. She com-
mended herself to God and
went on until she came into the forest.
She dared not to go far in for the savage
beasts and serpents; so she crouched
down in a dense thicket, and went to
sleep there, and she slept until the mor-
row at the first hour of the morning,
when the herd-boys came forth from
the town and drove their beasts be-
tween the wood and the river. And
they betook themselves one side, to a
most beautiful spring which was at
the edge of the forest, and they spread
a cloak and put their food on it. While

they ate, Nicolette awoke to the voices of the birds and the herd-boys, and she hurried to them.

“Fair youths,” said she, “may God aid you!” ☛ “God bless you!” said the one who was more ready of tongue than the others. ☛ “Fair youths,” said she, “do you know Aucassin, son of the Count Garin de Beaucaire?” ☛ “Yes, well do we know him.” ☛ “If God help you, fair youths,” said she, “tell him that there is a beast in this forest that he should come and chase; and that if he can take it, he would not give one of its limbs for one hundred gold marks, nor for five hundred, nor for any money.”

And they looked at her; and they saw her so beautiful that they were all astonished at her.

“I tell him!” said the one who was more ready of tongue than the others.

“Sorrow to him who shall ever speak it; or whoever shall tell him! It is a fantasy that you tell; there is not a beast of such worth in this forest, neither deer nor lion nor wild-boar, of which one of the limbs is worth more than two pence, or three at the most,—and you speak of so much money! But sorrow to him who believes in you, or who ever shall tell him. You are a fairy, and we have no liking for your company,—so go your way!” “Ah! fair youth,” said she, “you will do so! The beast has such a remedy that Aucassin will be cured of his hurt. And I have here five sous in my purse; take, and tell him. And within three days it behooves him to chase it, and if in three days he find it not, never will he be cured of his hurt.” “Faith!” said he, “the pennies we will take, and if he come here, we will tell him, but we

will never go to seek him." & "As God wills!" said she.

Then she takes leave of the herd-boys, and goes away.

Now it is Sung:

SO Nicolette, the bright-faced
may,
Leaves the herds and goes
her way;

Through the leafy wood she trode,
An ancient pathway was her road,
Till at the turning place she stays,—
It is the fork where seven ways
Go through the country roundabout;
And there she ponders as in doubt
How she may prove her lover's faith,
And if he love her as he saith.
She took the lily flowers fair,
And oaken saplings twisted there,
Many a leaf she wove between,
And made a bower fair and green,—
No fairer ever yet was seen.

She swore to God who never lied,
If this way Aucassin shall ride,
And will not tarry there and take
His rest awhile for her love's sake,
He never shall her true love be,
Nor his love she.

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

NICOLETTE had made the bower as you have heard and understood; very beautiful and very neat; and she had bedecked it well within and without with flowers and with leaves; and she hid herself near the bower in a thick bush that she might see what Aucassin would do.

And the cry and the noise went through all the land and all the country that Nicolette was lost. Some say she is run away, and others said the Count Garin had done her to death.

Whoever had joy of this, Aucassin was not joyful. And Count Garin his father ordered him taken out of prison; and he sent for the Knights of the land and the noble damosels, and he had a very fine feast made, because he hoped to comfort Aucassin his son.

At the time when the feast was at its height, Aucassin was leaning on a rail of a balcony all dolorous and all bowed down. Whoever could demean himself with joy, Aucassin had no will for it, since he saw nothing of her whom he loved. A Knight looked at him, and came to him and accosted him.

"Aucassin," said he, "of the same hurt as you have, I have been wounded. I will give you good counsel, if you will believe me." ❀ "Sir," said Aucassin, "great thanks! Good counsel would I buy dear." ❀ "Mount horse," said he, "and go along the

edge of the forest to amuse yourself;
and you will see the flowers and the
grass, and will hear the little birds sing.
Peradventure you may hear a word of
which you will be better." "Sir,"
said Aucassin, "great thanks! And I
will do it."

He stole away from the hall, and
went down the stairs and into the
stable where his horse was. He or-
dered the saddle and the bridle to be
put on; he put foot in stirrup and
mounted and came out from the
castle. And he went until he came to
the forest, and he rode until he came
to the spring, and he found the herd-
boys at the hour of none (three o'clock);
and they had spread a cloak on the
grass, and they were eating their bread
and made very great mirth.

Now it is sung:

SO the herd-boys merry be,
There were Martin, Esmerie,
Fruelin and Johanet,
Robinçon and Aubriet;
“Fellows,” one spoke up and said
“God give Aucassin his aid,—
Faith, a pretty youth, I say!—
And that little dainty may,
She that had the golden hair,
Face so clear and eyes of vair,
She who gave us pennies bright,
Which shall buy us cakes to-night,
Knives with sheaths, and whistles
clear,
Little clubs, and flutes to cheer,
Also little pipes that squeal,—
May God him heal!”

ie,
Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

WHEN Aucassin heard the herd-boys hethought of Nicolette, his most sweet friend whom he loved so much, and he thought she had been there. And he touched the horse with the spurs, and came to the herd-boys.

"Fair youths, God aid you!" "God bless you!" said the one who was more ready of tongue than the others. "Fair youths," said he, "sing again the song you sang just now!" "We will not sing it," said the one who was more ready of tongue than the others. "Now sorrow be to him who shall sing it for you, fair sir!" "Fair youths," said Aucassin, "do you not know me?" "Yes, we know well that you are Aucassin our young lord, but we are not yours but the Count's." "Fair

youths, you will do so, I pray you!"

"Oh, dear heart!" said this one. "Why should I sing for you if it does not suit me?—when there is not so great a man in this country—save Count Garin himself—who, if he found my oxen or my cows or my sheep in his field, or in his wheat, would so risk having his eyes torn out that he would dare to chase them away. And why should I sing for you, if it does not suit me?"

"If God help y^e, fair youths, you will do so! And take ten sous that I have here in a purse."

"Sir, the money we will take, but I will not sing for you, for I have sworn it; but I will tell it to you if you like."

"As God wills!" said Aucassin; "I would like it told better than have nothing."

"Sir, we were here lately, between the first hour of the morning and the third, and we ate our bread beside this spring,

as we do now; and a maiden came here, the fairest thing in the world, so that we thought she was a fairy, and that all this wood was lightened by her. And she gave us so much of her money that we made covenant with her that if you came here, we would tell you that you should go to hunt in this forest; that there is a beast of which, if you can take it, you would not give one of its limbs for five hundred marks of silver, nor for any money; for the beast has such a remedy that if you can take it, you will be cured from your wounds. And within three days it behooves you to catch it, and if you have not caught it, nevermore will you see it. Now chase it if you choose, or leave it if you choose, for I am well acquitted towards her." ❀ "Fair youths," said Aucassin, "you have said enough. And may God let me find it!"

Now it is sung :

WHEN Aucassin these words
did hear,
All of his gentle true-love
dear,

They sank full deep into his heart;
Then from the herd-boys he did part.
He entered in the shady wood,
Ambling on his war-horse good,
And sometimes at a gallop sped, —
Till he spoke three words and said:—
“Nicolette, oh, sweet shaped may!
For thee I’m in the forest way;
I chase not either boar or deer,
But for thyself I’m seeking here;
Thy gentle shape, thy eyes of vair,
Thy loving words and smiles so fair,
Have broke my heart full nigh to
death!
If so God please, who gave me breath,
I’ll see thee yet before the end,
Sister, sweet friend!”

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say :

AUCASSIN went through the forest from path to path and his charger bore him on at a great pace. Do not suppose that the brambles and the thorns spared him! No, not at all ; but they tore his clothes so that one could hardly have tied them up where most whole, and so that the blood ran forth from his arms and sides and legs in forty places or in thirty, so that one if following the boy could trace him by the blood which fell on the grass. But he thought so much of Nicolette, his sweet friend, that he felt neither pain nor wound.

And he went all day through the forest in such a way that he never had news of her. And when he saw that evening drew near he began to weep because he had not found her. By an

old grassy way he rode. He looked before him in the middle of the way, and saw a youth of such sort as I shall tell you : —

Big he was and strange and ugly and frightful ; he had a large head blacker than a coal and was more than the full width of the palm between his two eyes ; and he had great cheeks and a very big, flat nose, and big, wide nostrils, and thick lips redder than broiled meat, and large teeth yellow and ugly ; and he was shod in leggings and shoes of ox-hide bound by withes of bark up to and over the knee ; and he was wrapped in a cloak with two wrong sides ; and was leaning on a big club. Aucassin hurried up to him, and had great fear when he looked at him.

“Fair brother, God help thee!”
“God bless you!” said this one. “As God help you, what do you here?”

“What does it matter to you?”
“Nothing at all,” said Aucassin; “I only ask you as a good word.”
“But why do you weep?” said this one, “and make so great dole? Surely, if I were so rich a man as you are, all the world would not make me weep.”
“Why! Do you know me?” said Aucassin.
“Yes, I know well that you are Aucassin the son of the Count; and if you tell me why you weep, I will tell you what I do here.”
“Surely,” said Aucassin, “I will tell it to you willingly. I came this morning to hunt in this forest, for I had a white greyhound, the most beautiful in this world, and I have lost it; for this I weep.”
“Oh!” said the other, “by the heart which the Saviour had in his body! You weep for a stinking dog! Black sorrow be his who shall ever pity you, since there is not a rich man in this land who, if

your father asked of him ten or fifteen or twenty, would not send them very willingly, and be too glad to do it. But I ought to weep and make dole." ❧ "And for what, brother?" ❧ "Sir, I will tell you. I was hired by a rich farmer and drove his plough; he had four oxen. Now three days ago there happened to me a great misfortune, since I lost the best of my oxen, Roget, the best of my team, and I go seeking him. And I have neither eaten nor drunk for three days past; and I dare not go back to the town lest the farmer put me in prison, since I have not wherewithal to pay him. Of all the wealth of the world I have nothing of any worth more than you see on my body. A weary old mother I have, and she had nothing of any worth besides a wretched mattress, and that he has dragged away from under her back,

and she lies on the bare straw; and I grieve much more for her than for myself. For money goes and comes; if I have now lost I shall gain another time and will pay for my ox when I can; never for that shall I weep. And you wept for a dog of the dunghill! Black sorrow to him who shall ever pity you more." ❀ "Surely you are of good comfort, fair brother,—bless you! And what was your ox worth?" ❀ "Sir, twenty sous they ask me for it; I cannot abate a single farthing." ❀ "Now take," said Aucassin, "twenty that I have here in my purse, and pay for your ox!" ❀ "Sir," said he, "great thanks! And may God let you find that which you seek!"

He parts from him and Aucassin rides on. The night was beautiful and still, and he wandered until he came to the turn where the seven ways fork,

he looked before him and saw the fair bower which Nicolette had made; and the bower was decked without and within and above and below with flowers, and it was so beautiful that one more so could not be seen. When Aucassin saw it he stopped at once, and the rays of the moon made in.

“Ah Lord!” said Aucassin, “here has been Nicolette, my sweet friend, and she has made this with her fair hands. For her sweetness’ sake and for love of her I will now dismount here, and will therein repose for the rest of the night.”

He took his foot out of the stirrup to come down; and the horse was big and tall. He was thinking so much of Nicolette, his most sweet friend, that he fell so hard on a stone that his shoulder flew out of its place, and he felt much hurt, but he tried the best that

he could, and he tied his horse with the other hand to a thorn; and he turned about on his side until he came all on his back into the bower. And he looked through an opening of the bower and saw the stars in the sky, and he saw there among them one brighter than the others. And he began to sing: —

Now it is sung:

“**T**HOU star! I see thee, Star, on high,
The moon doth strive to draw thee nigh;

My Nicolette is with thee there,
My little love with golden hair,
I think God wills to have her near
She is so beautiful

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[Lines lost from the original.]

E'en though to fall my hap might be,

Oh, that I were up there with thee!
I'd kiss thee close and with thee cling,
For, were I son of any King
Thou 'd suit my heart all else above,
Sister, sweet love!"

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say :

WHEN Nicolette heard Aucassin she came to him, for she was not far away. She went into the bower, and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him and caressed him.

"Fair sweet friend, but you be welcome!" "And you, fair sweet friend, well found!"

They kissed each other and embraced, and sweet was their joy.

"Ah! sweet friend," said Aucassin, "I was just now much hurt in the shoulder, but I feel neither pain nor grief since I have you."

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She felt him about and found that his shoulder was out of place. She handled it so with her white hands and so pulled it that, as God willed, who loves lovers, it came back to its place. And then she took some flowers and some fresh grass and green leaves, and tied it up in a part of her slip, and he was all cured.

“Aucassin,” said she, “fair sweet friend, take thought what you will do! If your father has this forest searched to-morrow and I am found, whatever may happen to you, they will kill me.”
✿ “Surely, fair sweet friend, I should be much grieved at that! But if I can, they shall never seize you.”

He mounted his horse, and took his true-love before him, kissing and fondling her; and they set out towards the open fields.

Now it is sung:

NOW Aucassin, the golden-
hair,
The graceful, amorous, and
fair,

Has come from out the woodland
way;

Within his arms his true-love lay

Before him on his saddle bow;

Her eyes he kisses and her brow,

Her mouth, her chin, her cheeks, her
hair,

And then she questions of him there:—

“O Aucassin, my true-love, say
To what land shall we flee away?”

“Sweet love, I neither care nor know;

It matters nothing where we go,

By highway, lane, or forest free,

If only I may be with thee.”

They pass the hills, they pass the
downs,

They pass the villages and towns,

They came at daybreak to the strand,
And there, alighting, were at stand,
Upon the sand.

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

AUCASSIN had dismounted,
he and his true-love together,
as you have heard and under-
stood. He took his horse by the rein
and his true-love by the hand and be-
gan to walk along the shore. And
Aucassin saw a vessel passing and he
made out some merchants sailing
very near the shore. He beckoned
to them, and they came to him; and
he so made his way with them that
they took him in their vessel. And
when they were on the high sea a
storm arose, great and marvellous,
which drove them from land to land
until they reached a strange country
and entered the gate of the castle of

Torelore. Then they asked whose land it was; and they told them that it was the land of the King of Torelore. Then he asked what man he was, and if he made any war; and they told him "Yes, a mighty one."

He took leave of the merchants and they commended him to God. He mounted his horse, girded his sword, his true-love before him, and went along until he came unto the castle. He asked where the King was and they told him that he lay in child-bed.

"And where then is his wife?"

And they told him that she was with the army, and she had there led all of the country. And Aucassin heard it, and it appeared a great marvel to him; and he came to the palace and dismounted, he and his love together; and she held his horse and he went up into the palace, sword girded, and

went on until he came to the chamber
where the King lay.

Now it is sung :

GHEN Aucassin, the gentle
Knight,
In that chamber goes forth-
right,

Up to the bed he went his way,
The bed whereon the Monarch lay;
He stopped, and stood beside the bed,
And spoke some words — hear what
he said : —

“Go to, fool! what’s this you’ve
done?”

“I am in child-bed of a son,”

The King said, “When my month
shall end,

I shall be well and then I’ll wend

To hear a mass; for always so

My father did; and then I’ll go

To fight against my enemies, —

I will not cease!”

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say :

WHEN Aucassin heard the King speak so, he pulled all the clothes that were on him and threw them down the chamber. He saw behind him a cudgel; he took it, and turned and struck and beat him until he had nearly killed him.

“Oh! fair sir,” said the King, “what do you ask of me? Are you crazy that you beat me in my own house?”

“By the heart of God!” said Aucassin, “ill-made son of a wench, I will kill you if you do not swear to me that never more in your land shall a man lie in child-bed!”

He swore it, and when he had sworn it:

“Sir,” said Aucassin, “now lead me there where your wife is with the army!” “Sir, willingly,” said the King.

He mounted a horse and Aucassin
mounts his, and Nicolette stayed in
the chamber of the Queen.

And the King and Aucassin rode
until they came where the Queen was,
and they found the battle was with
roasted crab-apples and with eggs and
with fresh cheeses. And Aucassin
began to look at them, and he was
astonished at them, very deeply.

Now it is sung:

AUCASSIN has halted now,
Leaning on his saddle bow;
He began to watch the fight
Full in open meadow pight;
Some had cheeses fairly good,
Roast crab-apples from out the wood,
Great mushrooms from whereon they
stood;
He who troubles most the fords
Is proclaimed their first of lords.
Aucassin, the brave and fair,

At the battle gave one stare,
And laughed out there.
Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

WHEN Aucassin saw this
marvel he came to the King
and accosted him:

"Sir," said Aucassin, "are these
your enemies?" ♣ "Yes, sir," said
the King. ♣ "And would you that I
avenge you upon them?" ♣ "Yes,"
said he, "gladly."

And Aucassin set his hand to his
sword and rushed among them and
began to strike right and left; and
killed many of them. And when the
King saw that he was killing them he
caught him by the bridle and said:

"Ho! Fair sir, do not kill them so
utterly!" ♣ "What!" said Aucassin;
"do you not wish that I avenge you?"
♣ "Sir," said the King, "you have

done too much already. It is not the custom that we should kill one another."

They turn and flee; and the King and Aucassin go back to the castle of Torelore.

And the people of the country told the King that he should drive Aucassin out of his land and should keep Nicolette for his son as she seemed truly a lady of high lineage. And Nicolette heard this, and was not glad to hear, and she began to speak.

Now it is sung:

KING of To-re-lo-re, lord—
(Spake fair Nicolette the word)—

"Your folk take me for a fool!
But my true-love so doth school
When his arms are 'bout me wound,
When he feels me soft and round,—
Then no dance, no carol gay

Harp, rebeck, or viol's play,
Nor any gamesomeness on earth
Has aught of worth!"

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say :

AUCASSIN was in the castle of Torelore, with Nicolette, his friend, in great comfort and great delight, for he had with him Nicolette his sweet friend, whom he loved so much. And while he was in such comfort and such delight a fleet of Saracens came over the sea and assailed the castle and won it by storm. They took the booty and carried men and women as captives away. They seized Nicolette and Aucassin, and they bound Aucassin hand and foot and threw him into one vessel and Nicolette into another. And there arose on the sea a tempest which parted them.

The ship in which Aucassin was went so far drifting over the sea that it arrived at the castle of Beaucaire; and the people of the country ran for the wreck, and they found Aucassin and knew him. When they of Beaucaire saw their young lord, they made great rejoicing over him; for Aucassin had stayed in the castle of Torelore for three years, and his father and mother were dead. They took him to the castle of Beaucaire, and they all became his men; and he held his land in peace.

Now it is sung:

AUCASSIN has come to fare
In his castle of Beaucaire,
All his lordship and his land
Dwell in peace beneath his hand;
By God's majesty he swore
That he holdeth sorrow more
For Nicolette his bright-faced friend

Than if all his kin had end :
"True-love of the sunny face,
Now I cannot guess thy place;
God never made that kingdom yet,
No land, no ocean hath He set,
But I would search it, if so be
I might find thee."

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say :

NOW we will leave Aucassin
and tell of Nicolette. The ship
in which Nicolette was be-
longed to the King of Carthage. Now
he was her father, and she had twelve
brothers, all princes or Kings. When
they saw Nicolette so fair, they treated
her with very great honour and made
rejoicing for her; and often they asked
her who she was, for indeed she seemed
a very noble lady and of high lineage.
But she could not tell them who she
was; for she was carried away as a
little child.

They sailed until they came below
the city of Carthage; and when Nico-
lette saw the walls of the castle, and
the country, she remembered that she
had been nurtured there, and carried
away a little child; but she was not so
little a child that she did not well know
she was daughter to the King of Car-
thage, and that she had been nurtured
in the city.

Now it is sung:

NOW Nicolette the brave, the
wise,
Reached the shore and raised
her eyes;
She saw the houses and the walls,
She saw the palaces and halls,
And then she called herself forlorn;—
“The more that I was highly born,
Daughter to the Carthage King,
And of a Sultan’s cousining:
Here a savage tribe hold me.

Aucassin, oh, frank and free,
Honourable, wise, and young,
By memories of thee I'm stung,
And quickened and tormented now!
Oh, may the God of Heaven allow
That I may yet my love embrace,
And feel his kisses on my face,
And on my mouth and on my hair,
Young lord so fair!"

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

WHEN the King of Carthage
heard Nicolette speak thus,
he threw his arms about her
neck.

"Fair sweet friend," said he, "tell
me who you are; do not be afraid of
me!" "Sir," said she, "I am daugh-
ter to the King of Carthage, and I was
carried away, a little child, just fifteen
years ago."

When they heard her speak thus

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they knew well that she told the truth; and they made very great joy over her and took her to the palace with great honour as the daughter of the King. A lord they wished to give her, a Paynim King, but she had little wish to marry. There she was about three days or four. She considered by what means she could seek Aucassin. She found a viol and learned to play; until they wished to marry her one day to a great Paynim King. And she stole away at night, and came to the seaport and she lodged at the house of a poor woman on the shore.

She took an herb and smeared her head and her face so that she was all dark and stained. And she had made a coat and a cloak and a shirt and breeches, and she dressed herself in the guise of a minstrel. She took her viol and went to a mariner and made

so much way with him, that he took her in his ship. They dressed their sail and sailed so far over the high sea that they came unto the land of Provence. And Nicolette went out from the ship and took her viol and went playing through the country until she came to the castle of Beaucaire where Aucassin was.

Now it is sung:

NOW at Beaucaire beneath the
tower
Was Aucassin one sunny
hour,

He sat out on a balcony
And round him were his barons free;
He saw the grass and flowers about,
And heard the little birds sing out;
Thoughts of his love were in his mind,
Of Nicolette the brave and kind,
Whom he had loved so long and well;
And unto tears and sighs he fell.

Lo, then comes Nicolette below !
She raised her viol and her bow,
Spake and told her story so : —
“ Listen, noble lords, to me,
Ye of high and low degree,
If ye care to hear a stave
All of Nicolette the brave,
And of Aucassin the true :
Mighty love between them grew,
Her he sought in forest deep,
Then from To-re-lo-re's keep
Paynims bore them both away :
Of Aucassin I cannot say,
But Nicolette, the brave and true,
Doth in Carthage live anew ;
There her father, who is King,
Loves her more than anything.
They wish that she shall marry yet
A King o'er wicked paynims set —
He is not loved of Nicolette !
She loveth only one young Knight
He who Aucassin is hight ;

In the name of God she's swore
Ne'er will she have lover more,
If she may not find that lord,
By her adored."

Now they Speak, and they Relate,
and they Say:

WHEN Aucassin heard Nicolette speak thus, he was very happy; and he drew her aside and questioned her:

"Fair sweet friend," said Aucassin, "do you know anything of this Nicolette of whom you have sung?"
"Sir, yes; I know of her as the truest creature and the most gentle, and most wise that ever was born. And she is daughter to the King of Carthage, who took her when Aucassin was taken, and brought her into the city of Carthage, until he knew truly that she was his daughter. And he made very great joy over her. And they wish every

day to give her for husband one of the greatest Kings of all Spain; but she would sooner let herself be hanged or burned than take such an one were he ever so rich!" ❀ "Ah! fair sweet friend," said the Count Aucassin, "if you would go back to that country and tell her to come to speak to me, I would give you as much of my money as you would dare to ask or take. I will not take a wife, be she of ever so high birth, but I wait for her, — never will I have wife if not her! And if I had known where to find her, I should not have to seek her now." ❀ "Sir," said she, "if you would do this, I will go to seek her for your sake, and for hers, whom I love much."

He vowed it to her, and then he had twenty livres given to her. She parted from him, and he wept for the sweetness of Nicolette.

And when she saw him weep, "Sir," said she, "be not dismayed, since in a little while I shall have brought her to you in this town, and you shall see her."

And when Aucassin heard her he was very happy.

And she left him, and took her way in the town to the house of the Viscountess; for the Viscount, her godfather, was dead. She took lodging there, and she talked to her so that she revealed to her her affairs; and the Viscountess recognized her, and knew that it was indeed Nicolette, and that she had nurtured her. And she made her wash and bathe and rest, eight whole days.

And Nicolette took an herb which was named Esclaire, and rubbed herself with it, and was as fair as she had ever been any day. And she dressed

herself in rich silk cloth, of which the lady had plenty; and she sat down in the chamber on a quilted coverlet of silk cloth, and she called the lady and told her to go for Aucassin her love.

And she did so; and when she came to the palace she found Aucassin weeping and grieving for Nicolette, his love, because she delayed so long. And the lady called him and said to him:

"Aucassin, now lament no more, but come away with me and I will show you the thing you love most in the world; for it is Nicolette your sweet friend who has come from a far country to find you."

And Aucassin was happy.

Now it is sung:

NOW when Aucassin's aware,
How his beaming love is there,
How she's come into his land,

Man so happy ne'er did stand!
With that lady he's away,
At the door he made no stay,
To the chamber he went straight,
Where sweet Nicolette did wait.
When she saw her love once more
She was glad as ne'er before;
Up she springs her lord to greet,
Aucassin beheld his sweet;
Out to her go both his arms,
Foldeth her beyond all harms,
Kisseth her on face and eyes.
Night goes o'er them in this wise.
When the morrow morn was there
Aucassin espoused the fair
Made her lady of Beaucaire.
There they lived from year to year
Taking all delight and cheer.
Now has Aucassin his bliss,
Nicolette hath also this:
So our song-tale closeth well
With naught to tell.

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